

St Cuthbert's Catholic First School

Published Equality information about the context of our school

Equality objectives for the period 2024-2026

This is our published information (March 2024) about our school population and the ways in which we work to eliminate differences of outcome and promote equality for groups with protected characteristics. It also explains how we promote good equalities practice and work to eliminate discrimination or inequality. The objectives we have set for the current reporting cycle are based on this context and are at the end of this document.

The school has data on its composition broken down by year group, ethnicity and gender and by proficiency in English.

We are a small first school with up to 90 children on roll including nursery provision. Compared to schools nationally this puts St Cuthbert's First School in the lowest Percentile.

Teaching and learning is focused upon engaging and responding to the needs of all pupils and engaging harder to reach groups.

The number of pupils identified as speaking EAL at the time of this policy (based on 85 pupils in total) is higher than the national average at 29% (21.2i% in primary schools)ⁱ. When we require support for an EAL pupil, we are able to draw upon the expertise of the County Council's EAL support teachers.

30.5% of our current cohort of pupils represent other ethnic groups than white British, and this number is below the national average of 35.7%.

Our disadvantaged pupils in respect of whom we receive the Pupil Premium Grant are reported on as a discrete group in order to demonstrate the effect of the PPG funding on closing gaps. We use the funding effectively to offer academic support and guidance and to subsidise activities and visits. The pupils in receipt of the grant are making expected levels of progress; occasionally, pupils also have disabilities and additional needs, and obtain specialist cycles of support.

Objectives relating to children eligible for Free School Meals are given a high priority, although financial disadvantage is not a protected characteristic, it is a significant priority for schools. The school is acutely aware of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our families; we ensure that a supply of pre-loved school uniform is available and that families know that we are happy for children to wear less costly supermarket brand uniform items.

Relationships in school are respectful and inclusive and gender stereotypes are challenged and discussed. Each year group is monitored, and any differences in achievement by sex are picked up quickly.

We represent, discuss and celebrate family diversity and the positive aspects of difference. We ensure that all types of different family circumstance is welcomed and

respected. Our RHE programme Ten:Ten helps us to teach this in accordance with the Catholic Church.

We challenge any perception that family diversity may be uncomfortable for some members of the community to accept; our priority is that every child should feel safe and be secure that the school recognises our legal duty to protect every member of the school community from discrimination, and to foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who don't.

We continuously reflect on the language used in resources and displays, letters home and the language of the classroom to ensure that we consciously use and develop awareness of inclusive, non-discriminatory language. This is an ongoing piece of work; language changes all of the time.

Our school uniform policy is flexible and the guidance does not discriminate against any child on the basis of gender, race, disability, gender identity or belief. Practical alternatives are acceptable.

The school has data on its composition broken down by types of disability and special educational need.

Our school has targeted provision and specialist cycles of support to make the curriculum accessible to pupils with additional needs or SEND.

A small minority of pupils have communication issues. We address this through targeted support and staff training.

3.8% of pupils are supported with an EHC plan compared to national figures of 4.3%ⁱⁱ.

The school is an accessible building, an accessible toilet and wheelchair accessible routes.

The school uses a graduated approach by identifying anything that is affecting an ability to learn, and then introducing strategies or interventions which will help to support the child's learning, including 1:1 support. Learners and their families are always involved in this process. The basis of this approach begins with high quality teaching differentiated for need.

We are very committed to ensuring that SEN learners enjoy the same opportunities as their peers wherever possible, by helping them to develop and maintain independence. Our objective is for pupils with SEND to be fully included within their school and local community.

We have set objectives and strategies to help us to better meet the needs of children with SEND. These are outlined in the school's accessibility plan which can be found on the web site. The school's accessibility plan has more specific detail about the ways in which we are working to improve access to the environment, curriculum and printed information for pupils with disabilities

The school records and report instances of discriminatory language or bullying. We ensure that school is a safe environment and that the features of good, safe relationships and safe friendships are regularly promoted and discussed as part of the school's culture. PSHE lessons are the focus of a carefully planned curriculum to help prepare children to feel safe and supported as they live in modern Britain.

All staff and some governors access the Home Office online Prevent training as required. They recognise the relationship between hate crime and radicalisation or extremism.

We recognise the limited opportunities many of our children have to experience the wider UK and urban contexts that exist outside Northumberland and prioritise a programme of learning including visits and visitors to address this.

Documentation and record-keeping

Our school has a statement of overarching equality policy which is published to the website.

The school aims to extend children's understanding of fostering good relations and challenging discrimination in a practical context through the work we do on promoting friendship, dealing with feelings and feeling safe to share concerns with adults.

Responsibilities

Senior members of staff have special responsibility for equalities matters and statutory elements of the curriculum such as RSHE, PE and RE and the important role these play in the wider Personal Development of children.

Staffing

We are mindful of equal opportunities practice in the recruitment and promotion of staff.

Behaviour and safety

These are clear procedures for dealing with prejudice-related bullying and incidents.

The school receives an annual confirmation of the number of racist incidents reported to the local authority (if any).

Surveys of parents, carers, staff and pupils show that most pupils feel safe from all kinds of bullying. This kind of involvement identifies any issues that can then be addressed.

Curriculum

Focused attention is paid to the needs of specific groups of pupils. There is extra or special provision for certain groups, which changes as appropriate.

There is coverage in the curriculum of equalities issues, particularly with regard to tackling prejudice and promoting community cohesion and mutual understanding.

These are activities across the curriculum to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the help them to embody values and develop character traits such as resilience, determination, perseverance and optimism.

Consultation and involvement

The school has procedures for consulting and involving parent and carers, and for engaging with local groups and organisations, and has regard in these for the concerns and requirements of the Equality Act.

The school has procedures for finding out how pupils think and feel about the school and has regard in these for the concerns of the Equality Act.

Part Two: Objectives

Fostering Good Relations

Using CAFOD's Catholic Social Teaching programme we will help children to understand the call to love our neighbours in every situation, especially those living in poverty. Through CST teaching we will continue to extend and broaden children's critical thinking and awareness of the wider context of multi-cultural, multi-faith modern Britain and wider world. In extending the range of the issues we see, discuss and debate, we are confident that we are preparing children for life in the modern world and to understand the 7 principles of; Dignity; Solidarity; The Common Good; The option for the poor; Peace; Creation & Environment and The Dignity of Work and Participation.

We have also trained to be able to lead Commando Joe's throughout the school – this character education programme allows us to build character; self-worth and confidence in our young people, giving them the building blocks to develop life skills, character traits, attributes and behaviours which have a positive impact on their wellbeing, confidence and life throughout school and beyond.

Evidence of Impact:

Over the 4 years of the objective, we expect both staff and pupils to demonstrate their wider knowledge, and to demonstrate a secure understanding of concepts of community cohesion, diversity within society, personal, community and global responsibility and challenges.

Through the CAFOD programme, Commando Joe's curriculum, PSHE and RHE we will continue to extend the range of opportunities the children have to engage with various themes.

Expected evidence of impact:

- Increased awareness of equality and justice articulated by staff and pupils.
- Increased awareness in themselves of the 7 building blocks of CJ's; Resilience, Empathy; Self-Awareness; Passion; Excellence; Communication & Teamwork
- Greater resilience and an awareness of national, local and global issues articulated by children.

- Willingness to challenge discriminatory thoughts and practices.
- Children acting as agents for change and advocates, respecting and protecting the rights of others, for example by fundraising for and contributing to their local food bank, CAFOD etc.
- Pupils will understand why Northumberland and society is changing; about their own personal responsibility and how they can be supportive and involved in social action and campaigns.
- Oracy and open debate: children challenging and questioning other viewpoints and substantiating their perspectives.

Closing Gaps: (Ensuring equality of opportunity) - responding to Northumberland's Inequalities Plan.

At St Cuthbert's, we have a clear picture of which children, due to protected characteristics such as age, disability, sex or ethnicity might have experienced inequality in the chances they have had to make the same level of progress as their peers in some areas of the curriculum. This had been exacerbated for the year groups most affected by the Covid 19 circumstances; home learning, lost learning, decreased levels of interaction, lost resilience and for some children poorer attendance due to parental concerns about respiratory illnesses and contagion.

It is our objective to diminish any differences in outcome for any child who has experienced any form of inequality or disadvantage, and this includes children who have experienced financial disadvantage or who were impacted by Covid school closures.

Children are fortunate, due to the size of the school, and the staff awareness of the challenges each child faces to be able to have support tailored to their needs. Some of the strategies the school will use over the 4 years this objective is in place include:

- Developing and refining the graduated approach for pupils with SEND
- Strategies to promote and enhance emotional aspects of wellbeing and mental health, such as the role of the Mental Health lead in school
- Evaluating and implementing evidence-based interventions and catch-up programmes
- Ensuring that digital exclusion and other barriers to learning and equality are addressed
- Addressing developmental delays in speech and language, toileting etc
- Developing resilience through residential visits and opportunities to develop physical and emotional resilience.
- Introducing cycles of support through Early Help
- Working in partnership with parents and carers to enhance and build on the support the school is able to offer
- Ensuring that the nurturing, emotionally attuned approaches also extend to staff and their circumstances; to recognise and reward the amount of energy and personal resources their role demands of them.

Evidence of impact

- Every child nurtured and supported as an individual

- Thriving relationships across the whole school community including parents, carers, staff and community partners
- An open door policy in school, where communication flows freely in the best interests of every child.
- Accessible communication systems working well. Including; SchoolComms, school website; school Facebook page; email, newsletters and opportunities to contact the school and be responded to within a prompt timeframe.

Poverty Proofing the School Day

Following training by the headteacher by Schools North East on Poverty Proofing we have ensured the ways in which school could better understand their perspectives on affordable and challenging aspects of school life. Ensuring the following;

- That some requests for charitable donations can cause pressure for families experiencing hardship. We try, for example to ask for donations of 'a bottle' at Christmas, but this could be shampoo, ketchup or inexpensive items.
- That we could be more discreet about the way in which school photos are sent home.
- Christmas cards are not encouraged to be written for everyone instead children are asked to make one card for their class
- Birthday cakes/sweets are not promoted / encouraged
- Making donated and borrowed bikes available for bikeability sessions ensures that no child feels left out if they don't have one to bring along.

Northumberland Inequalities Plan

People in the most deprived communities in Northumberland have shorter healthy lives than those in our least deprived.

A plan has been developed to reduce inequalities to enable people to live healthy, happy lives for longer.

One of the ways we are all working towards this is in 'creating a system, including communities and residents in which everyone has responsibility for making change happen'.

We plan to continue and extend our teaching of 'growing our own' in school Including;

- Taking part in the Royal Horticultural Society 'Grow with it' project allowing children to take part in citizen science enquiry to find out how we can grow in a changing climate

Looking ahead to our conversion to a primary school later in 2025: we are planning a number of strategies that we feel will impact on the cost of living in a positive way:

- We are planning ahead to ensure that fruit and fresh snacks will still be available for the older UKS2 children not covered by the current scheme. We also considered adding extra fruit to the school meals allocation of food our cook purchases.
- We plan to ensure that every eligible pupil in Year 6 will have access to their own 'puberty bag' of menstrual products.

ⁱ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2021-22>

ⁱⁱ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>